

THE
FIRST
Annual Report
OF THE
EDINBURGH SOCIETY
FOR PROMOTING THE MITIGATION AND ULTIMATE
ABOLITION
OF
NEGRO SLAVERY ;
WITH AN
APPENDIX.

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1824.

OFFICE-BEARERS.

President.

*THE REVEREND THOMAS DAVIDSON OF MUIR-
HOUSE, D. D.*

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RESOLUTIONS

Adopted at the Formation of the Society, on the 30th June 1823.

I. THAT the efforts of the British Legislature, and of the British Government, for the abolition of the Slave Trade, deserve the gratitude of the World, and hold out an example, honourable to the people of this country, and worthy the imitation of all nations.

II. That although the above efforts, it may be hoped, have been successful in preventing the farther importation of Slaves into the British Colonies; it is deeply to be deplored, that many years have now passed away without the adoption of any effectual means for meliorating the unhappy lot of the numerous Slave population belonging to these Colonies.

III. That above 800,000 of our fellow-creatures have thus been shut out from the ordinary privileges of society; and though possessing the same moral capabilities with ourselves, have, with some rare exceptions, been systematically depressed almost beneath the level of the brute creation, plunged in the lowest depths of ignorance, and reduced to a state of demoralization, which is revolting to every feeling mind, and unworthy of a nation that bears the Christian name.

IV. That a state of Society in which it is notorious that the marriage tie is almost unknown,—and the closest bonds of kindred are liable, at every moment, to be broken asunder;—where the Sabbath day brings neither its sanctity nor its peaceful repose to the degraded Negro,—where the Slave is exposed, the unprotected victim of brutal passions, and subjected to the ignominy and cruelty of the lash, often at the wanton caprice of the basest of our race;—all this presents a picture calculated powerfully to awaken the sympathies of our nature, and which only requires to be clearly exhibited to the British nation to secure the redress it imperiously demands.

V. That while it affords the highest gratification to observe, that this unspeakably important subject has been brought under the consideration of Parliament, whose wisdom, conjoined with that of his Majesty's Government, will no doubt be exerted in devising the best means

for correcting the existing evils, and for effecting, by a wise, a gradual, and a just course of measures, the general melioration of the Slave population; and while it is delightful to know, that there are, among the Colonial Proprietors, some individuals of enlightened and benevolent minds, who, bursting through all the prepossessions of supposed interests and of early association, have nobly avowed their resolution to co-operate in this glorious cause, yet, at the same time, the painful experience of the long protracted and memorable struggle connected with the Abolition of the Slave Trade is sufficient to shew how essential it is that the measures of Government, on the present occasion, should be supported by the united voice and efforts of the country.

VI. That, in this view, it is highly expedient, that an association be formed in this City, to be denominated, "THE EDINBURGH SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING THE MITIGATION AND ULTIMATE ABOLITION OF NEGRO SLAVERY."

VII. That each person contributing the sum of L.2, 2s. at one time, or of 5s. annually, shall be a Member of this Institution.

VIII. That the affairs of the Society shall be managed by a President, four Secretaries, a Treasurer, a Clerk, and a Committee of thirty individuals, of whom five shall go out of office each year in rotation, but who may all be re-elected, at the Annual Meeting of the Contributors.

IX. That a General Meeting of the Contributors shall be held in the Month of February annually, when a Report of the Proceedings of the past year will be laid before them; and that it shall always be in the power of the President and Committee, to call a special Meeting when thought necessary.

X. That all persons, whatever differences of opinion they may entertain on other points, who concur in a sincere desire to put an end to this most grievous outrage upon humanity, are earnestly invited to join this Association, the sole object of which is the advancement of the present and eternal interests of the Negro Population.

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS

Are received at the following places, viz.—

At the Treasurer's, WILLIAM BONAR, Esq. Banker, Royal Exchange ;
 SIR WILLIAM FORBES & Co., Bankers ; COMMERCIAL BANK ; MER-
 CHANTS HALL ; Mr OMAN's, Waterloo Tavern ; Mr M'EWAN's,
 Royal-Exchange Coffee-house ; Mr PLENDERLEATH's, North Bridge
 Street ; ALEXANDER CRUICKSHANK's, Hosier, Nicolson Street ; JOHN
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 drew's Street ; DAVID BROWN's, Bookseller, St Andrew's Street ;
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 PHANT's, Bookseller, South Bridge Street ; ROBERT JOHNSTON's
 Merchant, North Bridge Street ; YULE & ABERNETHY's, North
 Bridge Street ; ADAM BLACK's, Bookseller, North Bridge Street ;
 CONSTABLE & Co's, Booksellers, Prince's Street ; WILLIAM BLACK-
 WOOD's, Bookseller, Prince's Street ; and by the OFFICE-BEARERS of
 the SOCIETY.

First Annual Meeting.

Extract from the Minutes of the First Annual Meeting of the EDINBURGH SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING THE MITIGATION AND ULTIMATE ABOLITION OF NEGRO SLAVERY, held within the Waterloo Hotel, Regent Bridge, Edinburgh, at Two o'Clock, on Tuesday the 17th February 1824.

In the Absence of the Right Honourable the LORD PROVOST, who was prevented from attending by indisposition, WALTER BROWN, Esq. Acting Chief Magistrate, was called to the Chair. The Report of the Society was read by the Rev. C. H. TERROT, and unanimously approved of. And on the motion of JOHN ARCHIBALD MURRAY, Esq. Advocate, seconded by JOHN WAUGH, Esq. one of the Magistrates of this City, the following Resolutions were unanimously adopted :—

RESOLUTIONS.

First,—That this Meeting express their respectful approbation of the conduct of his Majesty's Government in so promptly redeeming the pledge given during last Session of Parliament, " To adopt effectual and decisive measures for meliorating the condition of the Slave Population in his Majesty's Colonies, and thus preparing them for a partici-

pation in those civil rights and privileges which are enjoyed by other classes of his Majesty's subjects."

Second,--That this Meeting rejoice that these exertions of his Majesty's Government have already been, to a certain degree, successful, in consequence of the spirit of co-operation with which they have been met by the Colonial Legislatures in some of the West India Islands, particularly Tobago, Grenada, Nevis, and St Christopher's, and that in those Islands important improvements in the treatment of the Slaves have been, or are in a fair train of being introduced. This co-operation is the most gratifying to this Society, from their belief that the adoption of internal regulations by the Colonial Assemblies themselves would be the most effectual and expedient means for attaining this object, equally desirable, as this Society firmly believe, for the happiness of the Slaves, and for the interest, if well understood, of their masters.

Third,--That the ill-judged and intemperate opposition by some other of the Colonial Legislatures to the very moderate reforms proposed by his Majesty's Government, is regarded by this Meeting with deep regret, as not only opposing obstacles to the performance of a great and imperiously demanded act of national justice and mercy, but as most hazardous and prejudicial to the true interests of the Colonists themselves.

Fourth,--That while this Meeting strongly deprecate the rash and premature emancipation of the Negroes, the late proceedings in some of the West India Islands, as demonstrating the degraded and unprotected condition of the Slaves, the impossibility of permanently retaining them in a state of servitude, and the ever-growing hazard of their forcibly emancipating themselves, furnish, in their estimation, powerful motives to persevering and increased exertions for securing that religious instruction and moral training to the Ne-

groes, which is calculated to form them to such habits as shall render an event in itself inevitable, not merely safe, but advantageous to all parties concerned, and prevent those enormous, though scarcely definable evils, both to the slaveholder and the Slave, which immediate emancipation, in the present state of the Negro character, might produce, and which such determined opposition to the most cautious methods of gradual melioration is obviously calculated to precipitate.

Fifth,—That a Petition to the Honourable House of Commons, requesting them to resume the consideration of the important question of the Mitigation of Slavery, and to take such farther steps as may seem to them expedient for carrying their unanimous resolution of last Session into effect—and expressing our acquiescence in any compensation which Parliament think may be fairly and reasonably required to consummate the great work of national humanity and justice on which they have entered—be prepared for the signature of the Inhabitants of this city and neighbourhood—and that the Right Honourable WILLIAM DUNDAS, Member of Parliament for the City, be requested to present and support said Petition.

A Petition to the Honourable the House of Commons was then read from the Chair, and on the motion of the Rev. EDWARD CRAIG, cordially approved; and, on the motion of GEORGE ROSS, Esq. Advocate, the best thanks of the Meeting were voted to WALTER BROWN, Esq. for his conduct in the Chair.

A List of the Office-Bearers for the ensuing year, which were chosen at this Meeting, will be found in page third.

Annual Report.

Edinburgh, 17th February, 1824.

THE Committee of the Society for the Mitigation and ultimate Abolition of Slavery are happy that the period fixed for your Annual Meeting enables them now to address you on subjects of the deepest importance to the cause in which you have embarked ; and to suggest measures for your adoption, the success of which depends, in a great degree, upon their being carried into effect immediately.

Of their own proceedings your Committee have little to report ; and they trust you will perceive that the nature of the case neither required nor permitted them to do much. They have remitted your contributions to the Parent Society in London : they have corresponded with the friends of the cause in different parts of the country ; and by circulating the publications of the London Society, received in return for your contributions, they have endeavoured to communicate that knowledge, which can hardly fail to produce in every candid mind a cordial co-operation in the objects of your Society.

But the most important duty of your Committee has been to watch the course of circumstances, and to wait for

the moment when they might call upon you effectually to act in behalf of the suffering Negro. That moment is now arrived ; and they have no doubt that the same feelings which led to the constitution of this Society will lead you to a zealous adoption of the measures which they have to propose. In the interval that has elapsed since your last meeting, however, so much has been done by the friends of Slavery to misrepresent your objects, and to ridicule your principles, that your Committee think it may be advisable to remind you, and perhaps with your sanction to inform the public, what really are the objects of this Society, and what are the principles on which it was founded, and on which they trust it will continue to act, until the necessity for its existence shall cease, with the cessation of the evil which it is its object to remedy.

Your single object then was, and is, to alleviate the state of Negro Slavery in the West Indies, and so to raise the character of the Negroes, by religious instruction, and by political regulations, as gradually to fit them for the enjoyment of personal freedom ; and of this, after all that has been written on the subject, your Committee sees no reason whatever for being ashamed ; nor has the evidence that has been brought forward by the advocates for Slavery as it exists, tended in the slightest degree to shake their confidence in the justice and feasibility of your object. We do not assume, nor do we even insinuate, that the slaveholders are generally cruel ; but we assert, that from the present state of the law they may be so, almost to any extent, without any risk of punishment. We do not assert that no improvements have taken place in the Slave laws ; but we assert that they still give such powers to the White, as can scarcely be possessed without being abused *. We do not assert that nothing has been done for the religious and moral instruction of the Negroes ; but we assert (on the authority of our opponents) that, at this day, after a

* See Note A.

lapse of two hundred years, during which British planters have had the absolute command of the Negro population, that population remains in a state of gross ignorance and brutal immorality; that as now circumstanced they are incapable of appreciating or using the liberty which we are anxious should be communicated to them, and that marriage, the very first element of civil society, is incompatible with their happiness, and unrecognised and unprotected by the laws under which they live*; and, finally, that such is their indolence and apathy, that to expect liberated Negroes to work beyond what is actually necessary for the supply of their immediate animal wants, is to betray a total ignorance of their character.

Such is the representation of the actual state of the Slave population, as drawn by those who deprecate any alteration in the system under which this character has been formed; and such is the state which, we are unwillingly obliged to say, a reverend advocate for Slavery, with an obtuseness of moral feeling fully equal to that which he has been describing, ventures to call superior to that of the British peasantry †. We have now to shew that this debased state of character is not to be attributed to any peculiarities of constitution in the Negro, but that it is solely and entirely to be attributed to the system under which he has been placed. And, in order to prove this, we need not have recourse to those true, though hackneyed arguments, by which philosophers of old, and even school-boys in our time, have proved that Slavery is destructive of all the higher virtues. We are fortunately enabled to appeal to facts,—to facts existing at this moment. We can refer to a Negro population of nearly 17,000, the greater portion having been liberated from Slavery ‡, of whom we may assert, that they are at least

* See Note B.

† See Note C.

‡ By the last returns the population is 16,671; of these more than 15,000 are natives of Africa, the rest being Europeans, and Maroon or Nova Scotia settlers.

rapidly advancing to an equality with our own countrymen in knowledge, industry, and morality. We refer to the colony of Sierra Leone, the greater portion of whose inhabitants have, during the last ten years, been rescued by British cruizers from such Slave ships as have been found transgressing the treaties of 1815; and having shewn what the West Indian system, operating for two centuries, has produced, we may now turn to the opposite example, and shew what has been effected in a few years by a system of liberal policy and religious instruction.

At Sierra Leone, then, instead of compulsory labour and incorrigible indolence, we behold 17,000 of our fellow-creatures rescued from Slavery, and living under a free government, rising rapidly from brute ignorance into an intelligent, a civilized, and an industrious population. The Gazette of the colony, appealing to facts within the cognisance of its readers, asserts, "that the superiority of the mountain roads, the cleanness and respectable appearance of the villages, the immense forests cleared away, and the soil covered with the various productions of the climate, fully attest the *unremitting* industry, (we are quoting the very words of the Gazette), the *unremitting* industry of this interesting people."

With respect to morality and intelligence, we find the Chief-Justice of the colony observing, that ten years ago, when the population was only 4000, there were 40 cases on the calendar; and now that the population was upwards of 16,000, there were only six cases. We again find the same magistrate declaring, that many of the liberated Africans are perfectly qualified to serve upon juries, and that they have so served with perfect satisfaction to their fellow-jurors. Your Committee could easily multiply proofs, equally strong, of the industry, intelligence, and moral character of the liberated Negroes at Sierra Leone. What they have stated is fully sufficient to prove, not merely that the Negroes possess all the natural quali-

fications for liberty in common with their fellow-creatures of a different colour, but that they have made more rapid progress in the knowledge and practice of Christianity, and in the arts and duties of civilized life, than was ever before made by any barbarous people whatever.

It is upon these unquestioned facts that we ground the principles of our Association. Contrasting the present condition of the Negro Slaves in the West Indies with that to which we see that it is not only possible but easy to raise them, we feel that it is our duty, and we have made it our fixed determination, to use every lawful and prudent means to elevate them from the condition of *brutes*, in which they have been placed and retained by violence, to that of *men*, for which they are qualified by the possession of those intellectual and moral faculties which our common Creator has equally bestowed upon them and us. But here we are stopped, on the very threshold of our proceedings, by the advocates for Slavery, who tell us that the subject is so full of delicacy and danger, that the bare mention of any proposed alteration in the system is enough to excite disaffection, rebellion and massacre in the West Indies. We will not stop to ask what must be the merits of that system to which examination is ruin. We will not ask why the Slaves, treated rather as children than as servants, should be so insensible of their blessings as to rise in fury against their benefactors, merely because we in Britain are so ignorant or so stupid as to underrate the happiness of their lot. But we say, that whatever may be the weight of this argument, the advocates for Slavery have now brought it to the decisive test of experiment. If the violent and inflammatory resolutions which have lately been passed in the colonial meetings, and inserted in the colonial newspapers for the information of all whom it may concern,—if these resolutions, holding out (however falsely) to the Slaves the assistance of a large body of English fanatics, in the wildest

schemes for overthrowing all law and property in the West Indies, and representing even the Government and Parliament of this country as concurring in these violent and destructive plans,—if these resolutions shall not be followed by rebellion and massacre, then certainly it must be considered as satisfactorily proved, that no danger is to be apprehended from the most violent discussions. But if, on the other hand, it shall turn out, (and your Committee fear this to be the case), if it shall turn out, that the publication of these resolutions has been immediately followed by insurrectionary movements among the Negroes; much as we deplore the effect, we insist that it shall be attributed to its evident and immediate cause,—not to the resolutions of Mr Canning, nor to the speeches of Mr Wilberforce, nor to the pamphlets of Mr Clarkson, but to the unaccountable rashness of the colonists themselves: and while we admit the necessity of prudence and caution, we lament that the conduct of our opponents should be so diametrically opposed to the advice they have so frequently bestowed upon us.

But our opponents have also facts on their side to produce. They bid us look to St Domingo, and say, Whether it is our wish to produce in the British West India Islands those dreadful scenes of murder and desolation which Negro emancipation produced in that unfortunate colony. To this we answer, That it is very far from being our wish that the British Government should adopt, towards the British colonies, measures in any degree similar to those of the French Conventional Assembly towards St Domingo; nor, we conceive, can any two proceedings be more essentially different than the resolutions of Mr Canning and the French decree of 1794, by which Slavery was abolished throughout the whole of the French colonies; the former only urging upon the colonists the necessity of a more liberal and Christian policy towards the Slave population, as tending ultimately to qualify them

for the enjoyment of freedom : the latter at once, and without any preparation, bestowing unconditional emancipation. But waving all consideration of the total difference of the two measures, we affirm, that the emancipation of the Negroes in St Domingo was productive of no massacres or insurrections whatever ; and that those who maintain the contrary manifest a gross ignorance of one of the most interesting portions of modern history, or a still more blameable wish to pervert and conceal the truth. From the year 1790 to 1793, St Domingo was indeed, like the mother country, a prey to contending factions ; and royalists and republicans, whites and free men of colour, carried on the most sanguinary contests with each other. In these contests, however, the Slaves as a body took no part, though individuals, enticed by the offer of freedom, attached themselves to the different contending parties. From the declaration of freedom, in 1794, we have the authority of Malenfant, Lacroix, and Vincent, all Frenchmen of rank and character, for asserting that no commotions whatever occurred ; and, what is more wonderful, that the Slaves continued to work as industriously and quietly as before. Lacroix informs us, that in the year 1797, “ the colony marched as by enchantment towards “ its ancient splendour : cultivation prospered ; every day “ produced perceptible proofs of its progress.” St Domingo was indeed again doomed to be the scene of rapine and bloodshed, when, in 1802, Bonaparte, then First Consul of France, sent out Leclerc with a large army to reduce the Negroes to their former bondage. Then, indeed, a scene of horror was exhibited, unparalleled by any of the crimes of revolutionary France : but let the shame and the guilt of these be attributed to the invaders, not to the invaded ;—to the French colonists who instigated, and to the French Government which attempted, the mad and wicked project of restoring Slavery ;—not to the persecuted Negroes, who shewed, by their valour and con-

stancy in a defensive war, as well as by their former quietness and industry in a state of peace, that they were worthy of freedom. These being the facts of the case, we claim the benefit of the evidence thus brought forward by our opponents, as proving that emancipation, as it took place in St Domingo, produced not idleness and insurrection, but industry and quiet.

There is one other case to which, at the risk of trespassing too long upon your attention, your Committee think themselves bound to refer. In the year 1780, Mr Steele, a proprietor of large plantations in the Island of Barbadoes, finding that his estate was going to ruin under the ordinary system, and particularly affected at what he called the *destruction* of his Negroes, resolved, though at the advanced age of eighty, to take upon himself the superintendence of his own estates. After a residence of two years, which Mr Steele employed in acquiring the practical knowledge of West Indian husbandry, and of the temper, habits, and dispositions of the Slaves, he began to put to the test of experiment the three following questions: 1. Whether he could not do away all arbitrary punishment, and yet keep up discipline among his Slaves? 2. Whether he could not carry on the plantation work through the stimulus of reward? And 3. Whether he could not change Slavery itself, into a condition of a milder name and character, so that the Slaves should be led to the very threshold of liberty, from which they might next step, without hazard, into the rank of free men, if circumstances should permit and encourage such a procedure?

The first of these experiments Mr Steele brought to a successful result, by taking away all whips and instruments of punishment from his overseers and drivers, and instituting a court or jury composed of the elder and more respectable Negroes, for the punishment of all minor offences. After some time, he tried and succeeded

in the second, by abolishing task work, and paying his Negroes wages in proportion to the quantity of work done by them ; and, lastly, he effected the third, by giving his Slaves the copyhold property of small portions of his estate, making them at the same time adscripti gleba, or serfs attached to the soil.

For a full detail of the manner in which these interesting experiments were carried on, and of their practical results, your Committee would refer you to Dr Dickson's valuable Work on the Mitigation of Slavery. They will only, in conclusion, quote Mr Steele's answer to the 17th Question of the Committee of the Privy Council, on the affairs of the Slave Trade ; namely, that while under the old system, the ratio of births to deaths was as 15 to 57 ; under the improved system, the ratio was as 44 to 41 ; and that, at the same time, the net clearance of the estate was above three times what it had been before.

We have thus, by the evidence of facts, been able to establish three principles of vast importance in this question. From the existing state of Sierra Leone, we conclude, that the Negro is equally capable with the White of religious and social cultivation :—from the authentic records of the Revolution in St Domingo, we conclude that emancipation, even when rashly and prematurely carried into effect, was not productive of those deplorable consequences which the advocates of the present system consider as the necessary consequence of emancipation ;—and, lastly, from the experiments of Mr Steele we conclude, that an alleviation of the system of Slavery, to the extent to which he carried it, while it added to the comforts and raised the character of the Negro population, would at the same time tend directly to the pecuniary advantage of their masters.

Your Committee will now briefly lay before you a statement of the steps which have been taken in this country towards the mitigation of Slavery, and of the consequen-

ces with which those measures have been attended. You are aware, that in the last Session of Parliament, the subject was brought under the notice of the House of Commons by Mr Buxton, and that, at the same time, a series of Resolutions were proposed by Mr Canning, to which the House agreed without one dissenting voice. These Resolutions were,

1. That it is expedient to adopt effectual and decisive measures for ameliorating the condition of the Slave Population in his Majesty's colonies.

2. That through a determined and persevering, but judicious and temperate enforcement of such measures, this House looks forward to a progressive improvement in the character of the Slave Population, such as may prepare them for a participation in those civil rights and privileges which are enjoyed by other classes of his Majesty's subjects.

3. That this House is anxious for the accomplishment of this purpose, at the earliest period that may be compatible with the well-being of the Slaves, the safety of the Colonies, and with a fair and equitable consideration of the interests of all parties concerned therein.

The substance of these resolutions was immediately conveyed by letters from Lord Bathurst to the Colonial Governments; and your Committee regret that, temperate and cautious as they appear to us, they have been received, on the part of some of the colonists, with the most violent and acrimonious opposition. The determined hostility to all effectual improvement, which is manifested in the Jamaica and Barbadoes resolutions, while it shews how little can be said for the existing state of Slavery, on the grounds of humanity, justice, or sound policy, forces us unwillingly to fear, that we are not to look for the co-operation of the Legislatures of these islands *. Other islands, on the contrary, have received the communication of his Majesty's Ministers with respectful cordiality, and have ex-

* See Note D

pressed their readiness to co-operate in any reasonable plans for the improvement of the Negroes. At Tobago, an act was passed last year, (previous to Lord Bathurst's communication,) which establishes courts of judicature for the Slaves, and gives them the benefit of trial by jury, —which admits the evidence of Slaves against White persons,—appoints guardians to take charge of their complaints,—directs persons committed as Slaves to be discharged as free, unless an owner proves his claim to them within six weeks,—secures to Slaves the possession and right of willing their property, —abolishes the Sunday markets, and grants them one day in every week for cultivating their provision grounds, except during four months of the year. At Grenada, in consequence of Lord Bathurst's communication, a Committee was appointed, who drew up regulations, in order to secure to the Slave a sufficient time for cultivating his provision ground,—a specific allowance of food and clothing,—a right of enjoying and bequeathing personal property,—to limit and record all punishments,—to admit, in certain cases, the competence of Slave evidence,—to discontinue the public markets on the Sabbath, and to devise some effectual method for ensuring to the Negroes moral and religious instruction *. At Nevis, we find the two branches of the Legislature declaring that they see no possible objection to a Slave buying up his freedom, under certain regulations; and resolving that the whip shall be abolished entirely as an instrument of driving,—that, as far as may be found practicable, the Slaves shall be rendered *adscripti glebæ*,—that measures shall be taken for the admission of Slave evidence under certain regulations, and that the punishment of females by cart whipping and exposure of the person should be discontinued. At St Christopher's, the Council has entered into similar resolutions. “These,”

* We regret to observe a report in the public prints, that the Legislature of Grenada have not adopted the suggestions of their Committee.

say they, “ are framed with a view of improving the physical and moral condition of the Slave, so as eventually “ to qualify him for a state of freedom, to which object “ this board will earnestly contribute, upon such provisions being made for the protection of the person and “ property of the proprietors of Slaves in this island, as “ may be expected from the wisdom and justice of the “ British Parliament, and from the benevolent solicitude “ of our Sovereign.”

These dawnings of liberality your Committee hail as the promise of better things yet to come. If this be not all that we could wish, it is perhaps more than we had a right to expect; and if the force of habit and prevalent opinion, even upon candid minds, be taken into account, we must allow that the planters of Tobago, Grenada, Nevis, and St Christopher’s deserve the thanks and the approbation of their fellow-subjects in this country *. And with reference to the white inhabitants of other islands, even of those where Slavery may be most severe, and where all overtures towards improvement have been most offensively rejected, your Committee disclaim not only all calumny, but all personal rancour or general invective. We only believe them to be men of like passions with ourselves; and we are conscious that the best of us is not good enough to be entrusted with absolute power over his fellow-creatures. We believe them to labour under the influence of strong prejudices, under which we in all probability should have sunk, had we been placed in similar circumstances; and we most earnestly hope that they will be enabled to see, before it is too late to profit by the knowledge, that the interests of justice and expediency must ultimately coincide.

Under all the circumstances of the case, your Committee have but one measure to propose for your adoption. Considering Mr Canning’s resolutions as embracing all

* See Note E.

that can reasonably be desired under existing circumstances, they would recommend it to you, without delay, to petition Parliament, that they will resume the important question of the Mitigation of Slavery, and take such steps as they in their wisdom may see expedient for carrying those resolutions into effect, with the earnestness of humanity, but with the caution of wisdom and justice; to assure them that in this cause they carry with them the hearts of a large and respectable body of the community; and, finally, to declare, that if, in any further stage of the business, they shall find it necessary to make a compensation to the planter, you, for your part, will not shrink from paying your proportion of any expense which humanity and justice may require at your hands.

APPENDIX.

NOTE (A.) p. 12.

In the debate on Mr Buxton's motion, May 15. 1823, Mr Marryat brought forward Lieut.-Col. Arthur, Governor of Honduras, as an evidence to prove that the state of the Slaves was so good that it scarcely admitted of improvement; and no doubt the extracts from Col. Arthur's dispatch read by Mr Marryat did assert this. His words are: "With regard to the state of the Black population, I have the most heartfelt gratification in assuring your Lordships, that it is scarcely possible it can be meliorated. So great is the kindness, the liberality, the indulgent care of the wood-cutters towards their Negroes, that Slavery would scarcely be known to exist in this country, were it not for a few unprincipled adventurers in the town of Belize, who exercise authority over their one or two Slaves in a manner very different from the great body of the community."

On this extract, which is certainly very creditable to the Slave-Masters of Honduras, we may make one remark. It acknowledges that some "unprincipled adventurers treated their Slaves in a very different manner from the great body of the community." Now, as Col. Arthur makes no mention of his attempting to check the misconduct of these adventurers, it is fair to conclude he had no power to interfere, and that their conduct, however cruel it might be, was not *illegal*.

This, however, is not the only letter on the subject from Col. Arthur to Lord Bathurst. We find another in the correspondence ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 16th June 1823. The letter is dated October 7. 1820; and from it we extract the following passage: "In my report to your Lordship on the 16th May last, upon the insurrection which had taken place in the interior of the colony, I represented that it had originated in the harshness with which some of the Slaves had been treated, and that I was not without hope the consequences on that occasion would have had the beneficial tendency of exciting a greater degree of humanity towards these unfortunate people. I am much distressed, my Lord, that my expectations have not been answered; and such is the increasing severity and cruelty which is now practised with *impunity*, that although I am

“ very conscious of the difficulty which has hitherto presented itself to
 “ his Majesty’s Government upon the general question of the admini-
 “ stration of justice in Honduras, I am most reluctantly constrained to
 “ bring the matter again under your Lordship’s consideration. The result
 “ of a trial, which was instituted on the 6th instant, against an inhabitant
 “ for excessive cruelty towards a poor Slave, *absolutely excludes every*
 “ *hope, under the present system of jurisprudence, of bringing offenders*
 “ *to punishment, when guilty of the most flagrant acts of inhumanity and*
 “ *oppression.*”

But, not to speak of particular cases or colonies, it should be kept in mind, that the general law of the colonies is, *that the evidence of Slaves is wholly inadmissible, not only against their owners, but in all cases whatever, either civil or criminal, affecting persons of free condition.* And where such is the law, it is impossible the Slave should have any *real* legal protection. The law, for instance, provides that only thirty-nine lashes shall be inflicted at once; but if a master inflicts ten times that number, and does so in the presence of a thousand other Slaves, there is no evidence, and he does so with perfect impunity. The language of the Report is therefore strictly correct.

NOTE (B.) p. 13.

The following is the return of marriages of Slaves which have taken place during 14 years in 13 parishes of Jamaica up to 1822.

St John’s,	1
St Thomas’s in the Vale,	none
Vere,	1
Clarendon,	2
St Ann’s, ...	none
St Elizabeth’s,	none
St James’s,	2
Portland,	27
Hanover,	none
Falmouth,	1
Port Royal,	2
St Mary’s,	26
St George’s,	47

It should be remembered, that the average Slave population of each of these parishes is upwards of 16,000. Nor are the few marriages that have taken place recognised or protected by the law. The married Negro has no security that his wife shall not be torn from him by the caprice or necessities of his owner; nor, when she is taken from him by force or by seduction, has he any claim for legal compensation. But such a union between the sexes, possessing neither the sanction of religion,

nor the protection of law, is not *marriage*;—the proper designation of such a state is *concubinage*.

The clergy of Grenada are very candid on this point. “The legal solemnization of marriage between Slaves, in this island,” says the Rev. Mr Nash, “is a thing *unheard of*; and, if I may presume to offer my sentiments, *would, in their present state of imperfect civilization, lead to no beneficial results.*” To the two other clergymen of Grenada, no application had ever been made to marry Slaves. Neither Mr Macmahon, during a ministry of thirty-seven years in British Colonies, nor Mr Webster, in his incumbency of twelve years, had ever *heard of such a thing*. In Trinidad, the marriages of Slaves are stated, in thirteen years, to have been three; in Nevis, Tortola, St Christopher’s, Demerara, Barbice, Tobago, Antigua, Montserrat, Barbadoes, St Vincent’s, Grenada, and Dominica, (with the exception of about sixty marriages stated to have been solemnized in the Romish Church,) the returns are absolutely *none*.

NOTE (C.) p. 15.

The Rev. G. W. Bridges, Rector of the Parish of Manchester, in Jamaica, author of a “Voice from Jamaica.” This gentleman, in reply to Mr Wilberforce, says, “If a constant supply of all the necessities of life; the best advice and assistance in sickness; perfect reliance on the future support of themselves and their children; if warm houses, freedom from all restraint during fourteen hours of relaxation out of every twenty-four, with a proportion of labour incalculably inferior to that of our own English workmen, whose o’er-wearied slumbers are too often broken by the agonizing thoughts of the future, or by vain attempts to sooth the heart-rending cries of their hungry helpless children; if these are blessings which can elevate the one above the other, so far the comparison is infinitely in favour of our West Indian labourers.” Does not the conclusion of this extract look as if the writer were himself aware of the absurdity of his position? He knew, that if the contrasted ideas of slavery and freedom had been presented to the minds of his readers, they would at once reject his conclusion with scorn and indignation. Bold as he is, he dared not say, “in favour of the Slaves,” but sinks into the softer expression of West Indian labourers, in the vain hope that we may forget, for a moment, that the West Indian labourers are Slaves. But, further than this, if Mr Bridges’ be a fair average account of the state of the Negroes, then every author on the subject, from Edwards down to Pinckard, Williamson, and Stewart, have most grossly misrepresented the state of things. Williamson, in particular, was an advocate for Slavery, and, as a practising surgeon, had better opportunities for judging than Mr Bridges. The reader may compare the following passage with Mr B.’s statement. “The yawy

"Negroes on estates seemed to me to be in a very neglected state. In the progress of disease, that *maintenance was not afforded them* which, with a view to cure, should be liberally dispensed. A disease, itself injurious to the constitution, is thus aggravated; whereas, if nature were supported by *fit diet, clothing, cleanliness, and comfortable housing*, she would work her own cure in most cases." (Williamson, vol. i. p. 88.

Is it not evident, besides, that Mr B. considers the Negro only in the light of an animal; and would it not be easy to prove, on similar principles, that a well-fed horse is superior in happiness to a British peasant? But, whatever he may think of the Negroes, we will not consent to measure those in whom God has implanted rational and immortal souls, by so mean a standard. The British peasant knows his duty to others, and the duties of others towards him,—no driver stimulates his labour with the whip,—no overseer can confine or torture him at his pleasure,—no master can forcibly separate him from his wife or his children. If his talents be superior to his station, the path of honourable ambition lies open before him; and if his lot be hard, it is his own fault if he possesses not the comforts of religion, and the anticipations of immortality. These are the superiorities of the British peasant, and these,—but, above all, the last of these,—it is our object to procure for the West Indian Negro.

NOTE (D.) p. 20.

Of the degree to which the passions of the Legislators of Jamaica have obscured their judgment, every one of their Resolutions affords abundant proof. Their 32d Resolution proposes an address to the Governor, concluding thus, "*The House think the present moment peculiarly unfavourable for discussions, which may have a tendency to unsettle the minds of the Negro population, which, the House have the greatest reason to believe, is at present perfectly quiet and contented.*"

This Resolution was passed in the House of Assembly, December 11. 1823. Mr Buxton's motion was made May 15., so that intelligence of it must have reached Jamaica nearly five months before. The Slaves, therefore, had for five months been acquainted with the proceedings in the British Parliament, and still their minds remained *perfectly quiet and contented*. Again, the present moment, says the House of Assembly, is *peculiarly unfavourable for discussions*, &c. and, therefore, they at once plunge into discussions of the most inflammatory nature. But why was that moment *peculiarly unfavourable*? Because the minds of the Slaves were then perfectly quiet and contented. We must, therefore, take it as the recorded opinion of the House of Assembly, that times of tranquillity are peculiarly unsuited for discussion, and that pe-

riods of insurrection and civil war are peculiarly adapted for temperate discussion and moderate decisions.

NOTE (E.) p. 22.

Since the above was written, we are happy to learn that Tortola and Antigua have acceded to Mr Canning's Resolutions. From the latter of these islands particularly, we confidently anticipated such a decision, as it has long been honourably distinguished by attention to the religious and moral wants of the Slave population.